



Brazilian Immigrant Center

Fighting for Social and Economic Justice

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Via email: LABTestimony@cga.ct.gov

March 11, 2013

Senator Gary Holder-Winfield
Rep. Peter Tercyak
Labor and Public Employees Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06605

RE: Written Testimony in support of H.B. 5527- CT Domestic Workers Bill of Rights (CTDWBOR)

Dear Sen. Holder-Winfield and Rep Tercyak:

I am submitting written testimony in support of the CTDWBOR for the public hearing planned in Bridgeport on March 13, 2014.

I have had the privilege of working with domestic workers since the summer of 2010. I have worked with domestic workers in both Massachusetts and Connecticut. I began organizing with Brazilian and Hispanic domestic workers in Bridgeport in March 2013. During my time working with domestic workers in Connecticut, I have heard several of the stories of these courageous women who have suffered labor violations, including being paid below the minimum wage, not receiving overtime, or not receiving promised vacation pay. At least one domestic worker, a housecleaner, was subjected to sexual harassment when a client disrobed and propositioned her in his home.

At our domestic workers congress on November 16, 2013, over 80 domestic workers gathered to talk about the problems they encountered in their workplace—the home of their employers. Some of the women work as helpers to other housecleaners (known as schedule owners) and they work in pairs or groups. They complained of being paid as a group, not individually, which can sometimes results in them not even being paid minimum wage or they are not paid for their travel time between jobs for the same schedule owner. These helpers tend to not have a good command (yet) of English and often have been in the country a few years.

Live-in domestic workers are the most vulnerable especially if they are undocumented and do not speak much English. These domestic workers are often afraid their immigration status will be used against them when their employers threaten deportation. These women are unaware of their labor rights.

Domestic workers are invisible and work in an unregulated industry where much of the exploitation goes unnoticed and unaddressed. Certainly, there are good employers who care about doing the right thing by their employees. The CTDWBOR will assist those employers by clarifying their responsibilities to their domestic worker employees.

The CT Domestic Worker Bill of Rights will address basic exclusions confronting domestic workers as a class of workers and guarantee some basic minimum rights that almost all other workers have. The CTDWBOR will ensure that all domestic workers receive minimum wage and overtime and have a written agreement that

outlines their duties, their rate of pay, and their rights under the CTDWBOR. Domestic workers will have protections from on-the-job injuries by extending workers compensation benefits to them. They will have increased protections in cases of sexual harassment and discrimination. Live-in domestic workers will receive notice of termination so that they do not become homeless. The CTDWBOR is rooted in principles of compassion, dignity, and common sense.

Every domestic worker deserves dignity and respect and their profession helps the Connecticut economy by enabling their employers to go out and pursue their professions, earn a living, and pay taxes. Domestic work helps keep the Connecticut economy strong.

I ask each you and each member of the Labor and Public Employees Committee to support the CT Domestic Worker Bill of Rights.

Sincerely,

Meghan Vesel

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